SOVIET NAVAL FORCES

THE SOVIET NAVY

1. The Soviet Navy maintains six fleets located in the four major sea areas which contain the sea approaches to the USSR. These fleets are the Northern Fleet (unnumbered), 4th. (South Baltic) Fleet, 8th. (North Baltic) Fleet, Black Sea Fleet (unnumbered), 5th. (South Pacific) Fleet, and 7th. (North Pacific) Fleet. In addition to the six fleets, there are independent flotillas located in the Caspian Sea, the Danube and Dnepr Rivers in the Black Sea area, and the Amur River in the Far East.

2. The principal strength of the Soviet Navy lies in a large and powerful submarine force and a rapidly expanding fleet of modern cruisers and destroyers.

3. The Soviet rulers are carrying out a policy of naval expansion which requires virtually the capacity employment of all Soviet shipbuilding facilities for warship construction. A considerable number of ships of all classes, from cruisers down, is at present under construction. Thus the over-all strength of the Soviet Navy will progressively increase. The estimated increase in strength by categories between the present date and 1954 is tabulated in Appendix A.

SOVIET NAVAL AVIATION

4. Soviet Naval Aviation (A VMS) is organized into the air forces of the six fleets. These air forces are essentially shore-based, as the Soviet Navy does not possess aircraft carriers. Thus air support rendered the fleet by units of Soviet naval aviation is necessarily limited to operational radii of the aircraft from their bases. Soviet Naval Aviation is an effective coastal adjunct to the other elements of Soviet military aviation and could be used in direct support of Soviet ground forces. Although incapable of participating in long-range naval operations, a considerable degree of coordination between Soviet Naval Aviation and submarine and surface forces has been demonstrated in peacetime training operations.

5. Soviet Naval Aviation units have proportionately more pilots with World War II experience than have the other services, owing to relatively light combat losses. There is evidence that jet fighter aircraft may be assigned to certain Naval Aviation units in the near future. Operational use of jet aircraft in naval air units is a logical consequence of the rapid expansion and development of jet aircraft in other segments of Soviet military aviation. It is logical to assume that the Soviets will place increasing emphasis on long-range aerial reconnaissance, and Naval Aviation

will probably participate in such operations. TU-4 type aircraft could be employed for this purpose, and would materially extend the radii of searches flown by naval aviation units, now limited to 1100 nautical miles by the use of light bombers and seaplanes. Within that radius, however, Naval Aviation has the capability of carrying out anti-shipping strikes, ASW patrols, and aerial mining operations.

6. In summary, while the Soviets possess a well established Naval Aviation organization, good pilots, and adequate equipment for land-based coastal operations, their lack of aircraft carriers necessarily limits the scope of their naval air activities. For the present or immediate future, Naval Aviation has only limited capability for interdicting major sea communications.

7. See Appendix B for estimate of Soviet Naval Aviation strength.

EUROPEAN SATELLITE NAVAL FORCES

8. The Naval Forces of the European Satellites are suitable for defensive operations around their own coasts, but have practically no significance as far as offensive operations are concerned.

THE CHINESE COMMUNIST NAVY

9. Present Strength. The Chinese Communist Navy is believed to possess about 93 ships, (details in Appendix A), not including small service and district patrol craft. 44 of these are amphibious craft and 17 are river gunboats, which are incapable of operating away from inland waters. The largest Chinese Communist ship is the CL CHUNGKING, which defected from the Nationalists. She was damaged by Nationalist air attack in 1949, but may be operational again. Confirmation is lacking of persistent rumors that the Soviets have turned over to the Chinese Communists a small number of submarines and ex-Japanese surface naval vessels up to destroyer size. It is known that some Soviet submarines are based in China.

10. Future Strength. It is estimated that the Chinese Communists will not be able to expand their Navy effectively from their own resources during the next few years. The sources of any effective increase would be supply by the Soviet Union.

COMPARISON OF SOVIET AND ALLIED MERCHANT FLEETS

11. It is estimated that the combined strength of Soviet and satellite merchant shipping, including tankers, is approximately 700 ships (above 1,000 GRT) totalling nearly 2.5 million gross tons. This figure includes the merchant fleets of the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Albania, Bulgaria, Communist China and the Soviet Zone of Germany. It excludes Finland, with about 190 ships totalling almost 500,000 GRT, and Yugoslavia, with some 50 ships totalling approximately 210,000

gross tons. The total Soviet merchant tonnage is divided between the several maritime frontiers of the USSR.

12. This total is only approximately 5 per cent, of the total merchant tonnage available to the Western Allied Powers. It is, however, estimated that this figure will be adequate to sustain the wartime economy of the Soviet Union except possibly in the Far East. These requirements, it is estimated, will be limited to the operation of coastal convoys in the Baltic, the Black Sea and Northwest Pacific areas, and possibly limited activity along the Northern Sea Route.

13. In addition to the Soviet merchant fleet referred to above, the Soviet Union will have available a very large fleet of coastal vessels below 1,000 tons, fishing craft, and large river vessels which might have a limited coastal use. In the event of a sudden unexpected outbreak of war, it is possible that the Soviet Union would acquire a large tonnage of merchant shipping of Scandinavian flags, which would be caught in Soviet-controlled Baltic ports.

14. Troop-lift Capacity. The number of troops which could be lifted in the merchant ships and coastal vessels indicated above would be very considerable, but mere troop-lift capacity does not reflect ability to furnish logistic support nor does it take into consideration normal shipping requirements. However, in view of the short distances involved in the Baltic, Black and Caspian Seas, as well as in the Sea of Japan or coastal operations in the Barents, it is considered that the requirements for amphibious operations in any of these areas could be met.

EMPLOYMENT, EFFICIENCY AND MORALE OF THE SOVIET NAVY

15. Employment. The main tasks for Soviet Naval Forces in a war in the immediate future, or in several years time, will be:

a. The protection of the sea frontiers of the Soviet Union.

b. The support of the seaward flanks of the Soviet armies.

c. Attack against the sea communications of the Western Powers.

16. The major Soviet surface forces, consisting of cruisers and destroyers, have powerful gun armaments, high speeds and comparatively short endurances, and would, it is estimated, be primarily used for the defense of the Soviet coast and to secure the seaward flanks of the army. In this role, major surface forces could be supported by a large force of coastal and midget submarines, Soviet Naval Aviation, and large forces of motor torpedo boats and similar coastal craft.

17. It is expected that the offensive role against sea communications will be initially undertaken only by the long and medium range submarine and minelaying forces of the Soviet Union. It should be noted, however, that endurance and sea-keeping

qualities of Soviet fleet units will probably improve markedly, particularly as post-war cruiser and destroyer new construction joins the fleet. Diversionary surface raiding operations, possibly coordinated with submarine warfare, may be undertaken with the growth of the cruiser force and the possible future appearance of light fleet carriers. The Soviet Navy now has the capability of conducting raider operations employing cruisers and armed merchantmen, although in the immediate future such operations would probably be limited in extent because of the hazards involved and the relatively small gains which could be achieved.

18. The wide physical separation of the maritime frontiers of the Soviet Union and inadequate Soviet-controlled water routes between these areas, compels the maintenance of separate forces together with a decentralized system of logistic support. The present lack of overseas bases is another factor tending to tie each of these separate naval forces or fleets to its respective maritime frontier area. The Soviet Navy, thus handicapped, lacks the strategic mobility enjoyed by other navies. The fact, however, that the whole of the coast of China has fallen into communist hands may result in bases being available to the Soviet Navy, which may enable it to operate in the Southwest Pacific, and possibly the Eastern Indian Ocean.

19. Under present conditions, it would be virtually impossible to effect a rapid wartime concentration of Soviet Naval Forces, drawn from the various fleets, in any given critical area. This handicap confers a corresponding advantage upon adversaries capable of greater flexibility in the strategic deployment of their forces. The Soviet Union is attempting to offset this strategic disadvantage by developing inland and coastal waterways in areas under its control.

20. Efficiency. Technical and operational training in the Soviet Navy at the end of World War II was of a considerably lower standard than in the U. K. or U. S. fleets. Since the war, however, training has been continuous and intensive, and it must be assumed that the technical equipment and operational efficiency of the Soviet Navy may be approaching U.K.-U.S. standards.

21. The efficiency of the submarine arm of the Soviet Navy was likewise considerably lower than that of our own during the late war, but the submarine service has always been regarded as a "corps D'elite" in the Soviet Navy, and it may be expected that its gain in efficiency as the result of wartime experience and intensive training will take place more quickly than in the surface fleets. The equipment of Soviet submarines is estimated to be comparable to that of German submarines in 1945. It is estimated that the acoustic homing torpedo is in use, and that a proportion of submarines are snorkel-fitted.

22. Minelaying is well-developed in the Soviet Navy and all classes of ships from cruisers downwards, including all submarines, are fitted for minelaying. The Soviet Union has had access to German mining knowledge, and it must, therefore, be assumed that they are capable of laying mines with any combination of pressure, magnetic, acoustic or contact assemblies.

23. Morale. Much attention to the prestige of the Navy is paid by the Soviet press; food and pay are good by the civilian standards of the Soviet Union, and the morale of the ratings and junior officers is high. It is thought that the morale of senior officers may have been adversely affected by the postwar officer's "purge" and by the subservience of the Navy to the Army. The latter consideration, however, has probably been somewhat offset by the recent creation of a separate Navy Ministry.

COMPARISON WITH WESTERN NAVAL FORCES

24. The surface naval forces of the Western Powers are so much stronger than those of the Soviet Union that the latter will not be able for many years at least to dispute by surface forces the control of major sea communications. There are presently no indications of a rapid further build-up of Soviet submarine strength, but the underwater fleet of the USSR is strong in comparison with the anti-submarine forces of the Western Powers. Currently the Soviets have the largest active submarine force in the world, and are much stronger, in this respect, than were the Germans in 1939. Soviet minelaying potential is high in comparison with the minesweeping resources available to the Western Powers.

DEDUCTIONS

25. The Soviet submarine fleet is able now to seriously threaten Allied sea communications. Soviet success in undersea warfare against the Western Powers will in large measure, however, depend upon technical improvements made in their submarines and Allied capabilities to make continuing progress in ASW techniques and the development of anti-submarine weapons.

26. The Soviet surface fleets, restricted as they are to operating areas when their land-based air could furnish effective support, pose no serious current threat to Allied control of the seas, but are probably ready now to accept the following roles:

a. Defense of sea frontiers of the Soviet Union.

b. Support of the seaward flanks of the Soviet Army.

27. Soviet Naval Aviation is capable now of supporting the surface fleets in roles a. and b. above.

28. The Soviet Merchant Fleet is capable of providing the lift for short range amphibious operations, and of sustaining the wartime economy of the Soviet Union except possibly in the Far East.

APPENDIX A

TABLE I - SOVIET NAVAL FORCES

SURFACE FORCES

CATEGORY	1951	1952	1953	1954
Old Battleship	3	3	3	3
Monitor	1	1	1	1
Heavy Cruiser	6	6	6	6
Old Heavy Cruiser	1	1	1	1
Light Cruiser	8	15	22	26
Old Light Cruiser	1	1	1	1
Destroyer	62	73	84	95
Old Destroyer	11	11	11	11
Coastal Destroyer	36	36	36	36
Old Coastal Destroyer	4	4	4	4
Escort	13	13	13	13
Patrol Vessels	900	1100	1300	1500
Mine Vessels	400	450	500	550
Amphibious Types	200	250	300	350

SUBMARINES

The Soviet Union is known to possess a minimum of four high submerged speed submarines. Estimated total submarine strength follows:

	1951	1952	1953	1954
Long Range	102	104	141	221
Medium Range	97	94	94	91
Coastal	152	172	232	332

Future Development. The Soviet Union has the capacity to build submarines of all types in large numbers. No detailed estimate can be made of the annual increase in each category, but it is estimated that the strength of the ocean-going submarine fleet (large and medium categories) by 1954 will be approximately 312. It is also estimated that the proportion of high submerged speed submarines will by 1954 have reached approximately 19 percent of the total, and will thereafter increase considerably.

APPENDIX A

TABLE II - CHINESE COMMUNIST NAVY

NORTH CHINA:	1 Light Cruiser (Possibly Operational)
	6 Motor Torpedo-Boats (May be Soviet naval craft)
	1 Coastal Minesweeper
	2 LST
YANGTZE AND SHANGHAI AREA:	7 Frigates
	5 Gunboats
	1 Corvette
	13 River Gunboats
	10 LST
	12 LSI
	15 LSM
	1 LSU
	4 Auxiliaries
CANTON AREA:	1 Frigate
	3 Submarine Chasers (SC Type)
	1 River Gunboat
	1 LST
	1 LSI
LOCATION UNKNOWN:	1 Frigate
	3 River Gunboats
	1 LSU
	2 Auxiliaries

TABLE III - DISPOSITION OF MAJOR SOVIET FLEET UNITS

SURFACE

CATEGORY	Northern	Baltic	Black Sea	Pacific
OBB	0	1	2	0
BM	0	1	0	0
CA	0	2	2	2
OCA	0	0	1	0
CL	0	4	3	1
OCL	0	0	1	0
DD	12	24	10	16
ODD	5	0	3	3

SUBMARINES

Ocean Patrol	22	41	11	18
Medium Range	6	42	10	39

The above estimate is for 1951. It is estimated that future dispositions will remain in approximately the same proportions.

TOP SECRET

APPENDIX B

SOVIET NAVAL AVIATION

ESTIMATE OF COMBAT AIRCRAFT 1951-1954 (FROM A-BI 14)

	Mid-1951	Mid-1952	Mid-1953	Mid-1954
Fighter				
Jet	100	600	1000	1000
Piston	1400	900	500	500
Attack				
Jet	-	-	50	100
Piston	200	200	150	100
Light Bomber				
Jet	-	100	200	500
Piston	900	800	700	400
Reconnaissance				
Jet	-	50	100	200
Piston	350	300	250	150
Transport	150	150	150	150
TOTAL	3100	3100	3100	3100

TOP SECRET

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